

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting January 13, 2014 Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stafford, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Pazda

A. OPENING

A.1.& 2. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called back to order at 6:59 p.m. by Chairperson Pattacini, who explained the meeting had been called to order and the Board had gone into executive session to discuss contract negotiations earlier. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Adoption of Minutes of Previous Joint Meeting

ADOPTED – Minutes of the Board of Education/Board of Directions Joint Meeting of December 3, 2013. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

A.4. Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meeting

ADOPTED – Minutes of the December 9, 2013 meeting of the Board of Education. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. Adoption of Minutes of Public Forum

ADOPTED – Minutes of the Public Forum held December 18, 2013. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

7/0/1 – Voted in favor, Leon abstained.

B. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I

B.1. Student Representative Report

Dr. Kisiel introduced Dylan Burns, one of our student representatives who is currently a senior at MHS. Ms. Burns is a member of APB – Action Planning Board, and told us about the CT State Leadership Conference she attended November 22-23rd at Waterbury Magnet School. Leadership representatives from high schools all over the state attended the conference and their focus was to share ideas and projects about community service. From this event came the idea for April Community Service Month, in which each week of April will have a focus, such as Earth Day cleanup, collecting canned goods for Easter, etc.

Ms. Burns also noted that at the end of February Frostival Cup will be held, which is a spirit competition between the classes. The winning class will receive a monetary prize to add to their class fund.

Last, Ms. Burns stated that the Snowball dance will be held at the end of January.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered if Ms. Burns had any feedback on the new Medical Careers Academy at MHS. Ms. Burns stated she does not take part in that academy, but she has heard the students that do are enjoying it.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented six items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

- Transfer from Elementary Physical Education Contracted Services to Buildings and Grounds Custodial Charges account in the amount of \$185
- Transfer from Manchester High School Admin Postage to Manchester High School Admin Dues and Fees in the amount of \$125

C.3. Establish an appropriation for \$29,211 under the 2013/2014 Immigrant & Youth Education Program grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education

C.4. Food Service Employees Contract – Local No. 991 of Council No. 4, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO.

C.5. The Manchester School Nurses Association Contract – CSEA, Local 2001, SEIU

C.6. Manchester Public Schools 2014-2015 School Calendar

Secretary Scappaticci moved to amend Item C.4. to read with the dates of the contract 7/1/2013-6/30/2017 and Item C.5. to include the dates of the contract 7/1/2013-6/30/2016. Leon seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor to amend the Consent Calendar.

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as amended.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Meghan Patulak, student, is a senior at Glastonbury High in the Agri-Science Program. Ms. Patulak thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend GHS and spoke about the program, including the skills she has learned in making a resume and job interviewing. She has attended state competitions and learned communication skills. Ms. Patulak hopes the funding continues for new students, so they may also benefit from the Agri-Science Program at GHS.

Katie Libbey, student, is in her fourth year in the Agri-Science Program at Glastonbury High. She thanked the Board for their support and noted she has developed leadership skills, learned public speaking, and attended conferences in both Indiana and Kentucky to further her equine career. She hopes other students will get the opportunities she has and thanks the Board for also providing transportation to GHS.

Ciara Boucher, student, is a senior at Glastonbury High in the Agri-Science Program and has studied animal science, plant science, and agri-mechanics. She has set up adoption events at PetSmart and learned life skills, resume writing, interview skills, speech,

balancing her checkbook, and managing finances. She feels this has been an amazing opportunity. Ms. Boucher feels students should continue to have these opportunities.

Katrina DiGregorio, student, thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend the GHS Agri-Science Program, which furthers her personal growth as well as her future career success. The program is not just for farmers. SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience) is a four-year long project students in the program must complete, and for her project she raised Bull Mastiffs and had two successful litters. Ms. DiGregorio notes she did not leave MHS because she didn't like it, but to further her education towards her future career path. She is grateful to the Board of Education for making sure students have the maximum number of opportunities to further their education.

Jesse Kostiuk, student, is also in her fourth year of the Agri-Science Program at GHS. She thanked the Board for this opportunity that is not available in Manchester. She has taken courses in floral, mechanical, and animal subjects. Ms. Kostiuk is grateful for the opportunity to attend this program and feels it has had a very positive impact on her education.

Alyssa Chamberlin, student, is a senior at GHS in the Agri-Science Program and thanked the Board for the opportunities this program has afforded her. She originally chose to focus on animal studies, but changed her focus to floral design and obtained a job at a local florist in Manchester. She plans to study hospitality and become an event planner. Ms. Chamberlin has learned skills such as public speaking, completing job applications, and job interviewing skills.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, stated it was nice to hear from the students and that it is good to get involved. He recommended an article on helping children choose healthy foods and the book *Wicked War* by Amy Greenberger about the Mexican American War. Mr. Stringfellow noted that nine presidents were slave owners. He reminds everyone that the Dr. King holiday will be celebrated Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at MHS, as well as at Smith Middle School in Glastonbury on Monday. He notes that Dr. King was an inspiration to black men, himself included, and that Dr. King died for all people. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the movie *Long Walk to Freedom* and mentioned that the VEX Robotics team is competing this weekend.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. Bowers School Improvement Plan

Dr. Kisiel welcomed Dr. MaryLou Ruggiero, Principal of Bowers Elementary School, to share her School Improvement Plan. Dr. Ruggiero's presentation is available on our website.

Mr. Scappaticci thanked Dr. Ruggiero for her presentation and noted it is clear that she is passionate about her school and her students. He asked about the NWEA data, noting it is "instant data" and that instruction can be changed in response. Dr. Ruggiero stated they are just learning how to use this data and it is only one snapshot. They also review writing samples among other things. She notes sometimes we are overwhelmed with data. Mr. Scappaticci wondered how the achievement gap of about 10 points compares to similar schools nationwide. Dr. Ruggiero pointed out the different starting and end point score norms for the different grades and how the older grades have less of a spread from beginning of the year to end of the year scores. Ms. Radikas pointed out the norms are on the slides, on the left side, for comparison. Mr. Scappaticci was pleased that in some areas, Bowers has no achievement gap. Dr. Ruggiero attributes that to a passionate staff who connect with students and involved parents. Mr. Scappaticci also congratulated Dr. Ruggiero on the Robotics Grant.

Ms. Hagenow appreciated that Dr. Ruggiero is ahead of the curve in implementing changes.

Mr. Leon stated Dr. Ruggiero's enthusiasm and charisma comes out. He pointed out that Bowers is the largest elementary school in town with the biggest class sizes. He wonders if Dr. Ruggiero feels it is an advantage or disadvantage to having 60-100 more students in her school than others. Dr. Ruggiero noted that regardless of the overall size of the school, it is class sizes that are important. She pointed out that for support staff it is especially difficult in a larger school for them to get to know so many students. Mr. Leon asked about core spaces and assemblies and Dr. Ruggiero stated that assemblies are split into two presentations to accommodate the student body.

Mr. Pattacini pointed out a decrease in the number of students with a high number of absences. Dr. Ruggiero stated they are currently at 7% and she would like to see that drop to 5%. Mr. Pattacini was encouraged to hear that she is addressing that issue. Dr. Ruggiero noted that in many instances, if a student was in school and on time every day to learn, they may not require as much intervention.

Mr. Pattacini noted the drop in scores from 2nd to 3rd grade, which is attributed to students in 3rd grade having to read the test for themselves as opposed to hearing the questions. He wonders if that is a pattern across the district. He wondered what percentage of Bower's students attended SAAM this past summer. Dr. Ruggiero thought it was about 100 students. He also asked about DPI tracking. Dr. Kisiel pointed out that we no longer track to DPI as currently there are no more state assessments and we are fortunate in Manchester to be using NWEA over the next

two years as guidance. He stated the DPI (District Performance Index) and SPI (School Performance Index) are both going to be redone by the state.

E.2. Review of Frequently Asked Questions regarding SMARTR Committee proposal

Dr. Kisiel provides board members with draft responses to FAQs, noting they are the administration's perspective on the questions, not the Board's.

Ms. Cruz pointed out Q11 regarding savings on ongoing operational costs depending on changing costs from year to year. Dr. Kisiel stated that question needs to be answered; however he does not have the knowledge to be able to answer it, though it was partly discussed in SMARTR. In the time available to investigate this he did not have enough time to determine the figure fully. Ms. Cruz thanked Dr. Kisiel for thoroughly responding to these questions.

Mr. Stafford also appreciated the answers, but wants to know why Waddell was chosen. He notes that Waddell has the lowest number of bus riders. Dr. Kisiel stated that SMARTR did not intend to bring attention to Waddell and it emerged due to the options that were selected at that time and other options can and will be investigated. Stafford agreed that the decision is not set in stone and is still a work in progress.

Mr. Leon wondered if we are just going to review the questions or continue the discussion. Mr. Pattacini stated some additional information is required and we may direct the administration to get further answers. Mr. Pattacini thanked SMARTR for their efforts up to this point. Mr. Leon wanted to know the timeframe and expressed his frustration at feeling like we are "spinning our wheels". He wanted to know why we are not formulating a plan among ourselves and why we are waiting, we need a Plan B.

Ms. Hagenow is confused and has unanswered questions. If the Board is in favor of a 5/6 school, what happens if the referendum fails? She notes the recommendation is a possibility to close one or more schools, but policy needs to be followed and it may not end in closure of any schools.

Mr. Pattacini stated it is incumbent of the Board of Education to take SMARTR's recommendation and develop a draft on how to proceed with development of a plan to get to a referendum to improve our schools. He noted the Board is prepared to move forward with a 5/6 school but understands the public may not yet understand or approve of that plan and we can hold hearings for the public to education them on that topic and answer questions. He agreed there is a structured process regarding school closures and we need to agree on the next steps, which may need to be directed to the administration.

Ms. Hagenow agrees we need to do something from here and wonders why the administration is being asked to make the plan. Mr. Pattacini stated the administration can develop a plan for Board review as it would be more difficult for nine Board members to collaborate on a plan, and this will insure that the community knows the next steps regarding both the SMARTR recommendation and the Board's recommendation.

Dr. Kisiel restated the Board would like the administration to identify the next steps to take regarding the SMARTR Committee's recommendation and the Board's recommendation. There should be an opportunity for public comment on the 5/6 school that the Board is already behind. We need to clarify if the Board supports the closing of 1-2 schools and if so what is the process. Then, the question of how to address the facilities needs of the rest of the buildings needs to be addressed. We may or may not choose to close two schools based on new information and over the next three months it will be time to make important decisions. Dr. Kisiel stated he is prepared to help with that.

Mr. Leon felt it is a good idea to hold hearings on the 5/6 school because he is not sure there is overwhelming public support for that. He is frustrated and strongly feels that we need to know and communicate what schools will close, as this is all tied together.

Mr. Scappaticci disagrees with Mr. Leon, stating that elementary schools in Manchester are at 95% capacity and in the next 3-5 years we will have about 200+ more students in our district. Regardless of a 5/6 academy or bigger schools, we will need more space in our elementary schools. We can do this by either building or adding onto a school or with the 5th grade academy it will free up needed space in the elementary schools. He does not feel we necessarily have to close any schools.

Mr. Thames stated SMARTR has done their job and now the Board needs to come up with a strong recommendation regarding the wants and needs of the community. He feels we need to move on.

Mr. Leon does not disagree that we need space going forward, however he does not feel it is fair to ask the public to spend money on a 5/6 school without knowing a full plan, stating that they have a right to know if their school is up for closure before they vote.

Ms. Cruz pointed out that she had the impression closing Waddell, or any school, would come at the end of building two "mega" schools, not by creating a 5/6 academy. Mr. Pattacini agreed, but pointed out the community wants to see a full

plan. He directed the administration to develop an action plan for the community to show the benefits of a 5/6 school and a hearing on why this is needed. Also, taking into account SMARTR's recommendation and questions, determine what, if any, schools may be closed and he would like this complete within 3-4 months. Mr. Pattacini stated this would include a round of hearings for the community included in the plan. Ms. Cruz would like a tentative first forum date set as soon as possible.

Mr. Stafford stated we could rush and come up with two schools to close, but he does not see the reason behind the closure of the two recommended schools. He does not feel one of them should be closed and it is not right to rush this decision. He would like to see a lot of data behind a reason to close any school. Mr. Stafford feels the forum on the 5/6 academy should be held at Bennet and soon. He notes maybe we will close one school, or maybe none. We cannot decide that tonight because we do not have all the data. He did express his appreciation to SMARTR, noting they did a lot of research which he has been reviewing on the website. He wants more people happy than upset with whatever decisions the Board makes.

Mr. Leon does not want to rush the answers either; however we have been dealing with this for two years. He feels Washington cannot last another 2-3 more years. He prefers not to close any schools, but wants to get to the discussion phase.

Mr. Pattacini pointed out that SMARTR has done a lot of research over the last two years. He feels there is consensus to move forward with a forum on the 5/6 school. Mr. Pattacini directed the administration to make ready a presentation for the community, including architectural details, as soon as possible. He also directed the administration to develop an approach for the Board to make decisions regarding the next steps. Dr. Kisiel asked if this should be ready for the next Board meeting. Mr. Pattacini stated the hearing can be scheduled as soon as possible and the plan can be presented at the next meeting. Dr. Kisiel agreed that by the next meeting he will have developed an action plan regarding facilities and noted that it may be possible to hold a forum January 29th, as that is already scheduled as a possible budget workshop, which may not be needed.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Policy - Students – Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

G.2. Policy 3541 – Transportation

G.3. Policy 5110 – School Attendance and Truancy

Dr. Kisiel noted the Policy Committee had met last week and for Policy 3541 deleted the section on school choice, as that no longer exists in this district. Regarding the sexual discrimination and harassment policy, it is a new policy recommended by our lawyers and follows Policy 4013 which is a similar policy for employees. Regarding Policy 5110, it links both the attendance and truancy policies and assures they conform to state statute regarding attendance and truancy, while also identifying interventions to address these issues. The policies can be viewed in full on the website.

There were no questions regarding any of the policy proposals. Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration and Policy Committee for their work and noted these policies will come back at our next meeting for adoption.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pattacini reminded everyone that this Thursday at 6:00 p.m. is the Martin Luther King celebration in town, held at MHS.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Ms. Hagenow reviewed that present at the last meeting were herself, Mr. Scappaticci, Ms. Pazda, and Dr. Kisiel. The policies presented tonight were reviewed. The next meeting of the Committee is January 21 at 5:30 p.m.

I.2. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Minutes

Mr. Scappaticci reviewed that the Committee met January 6th, with Ms. Hagenow, Ms. Radikas, himself, Mr. Geary, Dr. Ratchford in attendance. The Chemistry and Spanish I & II textbooks were adopted. A class set of each will be purchased, along with an eBook version with free updates during the 6 year license. Also discussed were the MHS Academies being proposed for the 2014-2015 school year. Each academy will provide about 100 students with a small school experience. The six new academies are: Culinary Arts; Contemporary Communication; Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM); Pursuit of Truth – Logic and reasoning; Human Development and Family Services – Teaching, social work, Parks & Recreation; and Performing Arts.

J. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Ms. Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, was confused. She attended the public forum at Waddell and was told the questions would be answered. She did not receive any answers. She is not in favor of a 5/6 academy. Ms. Knybel feels the town is asking a lot of questions with no answers. She points out the taxpayers and voters voted the Board members in. She feels there have been significant questions not answered and

she does not see the Board coming together as a group. She does not see leadership. On another note, she was happy to see the Vo-Ag students speaking tonight and wonders how many students are involved in that program.

Ms. Tracy Maio, 57 Horton Road, is interested in hearing about Mr. Leon's Plan B. She thinks the Board needs a flow chart because nobody knows where you are going, nobody knows where you have been. She pointed out the 5/6 academy has already been voted on. Next to decide is to make larger elementary schools or remodel. Then, do we close a school or possibly use that room for Pre-K. We need to figure these answers out asap. She also wants to know where she can access the answers to the questions from the public forum as she only has some answers from the Hartford Courant.

Ms. Kim Gorman, 71 Strickland Street, wanted to address a comment she heard about parents wanting to send their students to magnet schools because they are fancy, shiny, new schools. She thinks that parents want to send their students to magnets because Manchester is one of the lowest performing school districts in the state. People like to live in this town, we have a lot to offer in this town, but she hears bad things about the schools. She points out that Saint James has a very old building, however they are known for the quality of their education. She also hears some families sending their kids to parochial schools because they do not want their children around the discipline issues in the public schools. Ms. Gorman feels it comes down to quality education and the reputation of the school system.

Mr. David Miner, 14 French Road, went online to the *Courant.com* and found his answers. He thanked Mr. Leon for his great points and noted they have been through this with Nathan Hale. Mr. Miner feels they will still be closing Waddell, just like Nathan Hale. He would like to know, before the Spring referendum, which schools will close or he will vote no for the 5th grade academy.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, notes these are troubling times in schools and we need to try to turn them around. He points out rich parents can send their children to parochial schools, but we need to take all students. We need to look at the positive. Mr. Stringfellow supports the Consent Calendar, especially Item #3 – the Immigrant & Youth Grant. He is tired of the bashing of immigrants as we all came from different countries. Mr. Stringfellow was impressed with the Bower's presentation. He suggested articles regarding discipline in the *Courant* regarding discipline in Middletown, and in *Attitude* magazine regarding ADD. He again stated he does not like the term subgroup. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the book *We Said – They Said* regarding dents with autism. He feels special needs and ESL student's needs should be addressed. He hopes as a person of color his point of view is listened to.

Mr. Ronald Curin, 65 West Middle Turnpike, thanked Mr. Leon for his points tonight and agreed that it has been a long time. He stated it seems a lot of consideration has been focused on achieving maximum state reimbursement versus the reward. He feels it is not as important as the reward and he wants to see test scores rise and racial diversity rise. He does not see money as being as important. Mr. Curin wonders if we close two schools and build two giant schools will that increase our test scores? He does not see it. He would rather see teachers with passion and less technology. He pointed out that in an article in the *Journal Inquirer* on January 7th they suggested a study regarding the possibly of Waddell being one of the schools to be made larger and wonders about that. He also felt he hasn't heard much regarding special needs students and what we can do in consideration of them with new schools was felt the answer regarding this was vague in the *Hartford Courant*.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Stafford would like a presentation from Curriculum & Instruction regarding the seven different academies at MHS.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary